



District of Columbia Healthy Schools Act of 2010



Background

The District of Columbia, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (DC State Agency) is responsible for the oversight of public education and the administration of the Child Nutrition Programs. During the 2010-2011 academic year, there were 129 DC Public Schools and 96 Public Charter Schools serving approximately 43,250 lunches each day. Approximately 62% of the total student population, attends public schools and 38% attend public charter schools and 72% of students are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Obesity is described as an epidemic in the District of Columbia according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.¹ In 2009, the Trust for America's Health reported that the District of Columbia was among the top ten states with the highest obesity rate among 10-17 year olds.² It is evident that schools play a critical role in improving the social and physical environment for children by offering healthier food options, providing effective nutrition education, and increasing physical activity, all of which can improve behaviors to address childhood obesity and encourage healthy lifestyles.

Healthy Schools Act

In May 2010, the District of Columbia City Council passed the Healthy Schools Act (HSA) designed to encourage its schools to improve school nutrition, physical and health education, increase student physical activity time, establish school gardens, adopt the USDA Healthier US School Challenge gold level menu criteria, and establish a farm-to-school program.³ The Act addresses the obesity epidemic in one of the nation's largest and most socio-economically diverse urban school districts. It can be considered a model policy to address childhood obesity in the United States as it is examined by government officials and public policy experts throughout the nation.

Objectives

The initiation of the implementation of the Healthy School Act began in fiscal year 2011. The DC State Agency, Division of Wellness and Nutrition Services has focused its activities on the following goals:

1. To improve school meals by adopting the USDA's Healthier US School Challenge gold-level menu criteria;
2. Increase the amount of physical, health, and nutrition education in schools;
3. Improve school based health and wellness programs



Methods

The implementation plan included the direct hire of new state agency staff to support the immediate transition of the Healthy School Act mandates during fiscal year 2011. The training and technical assistance for all School Food Authorities consisted of the following:

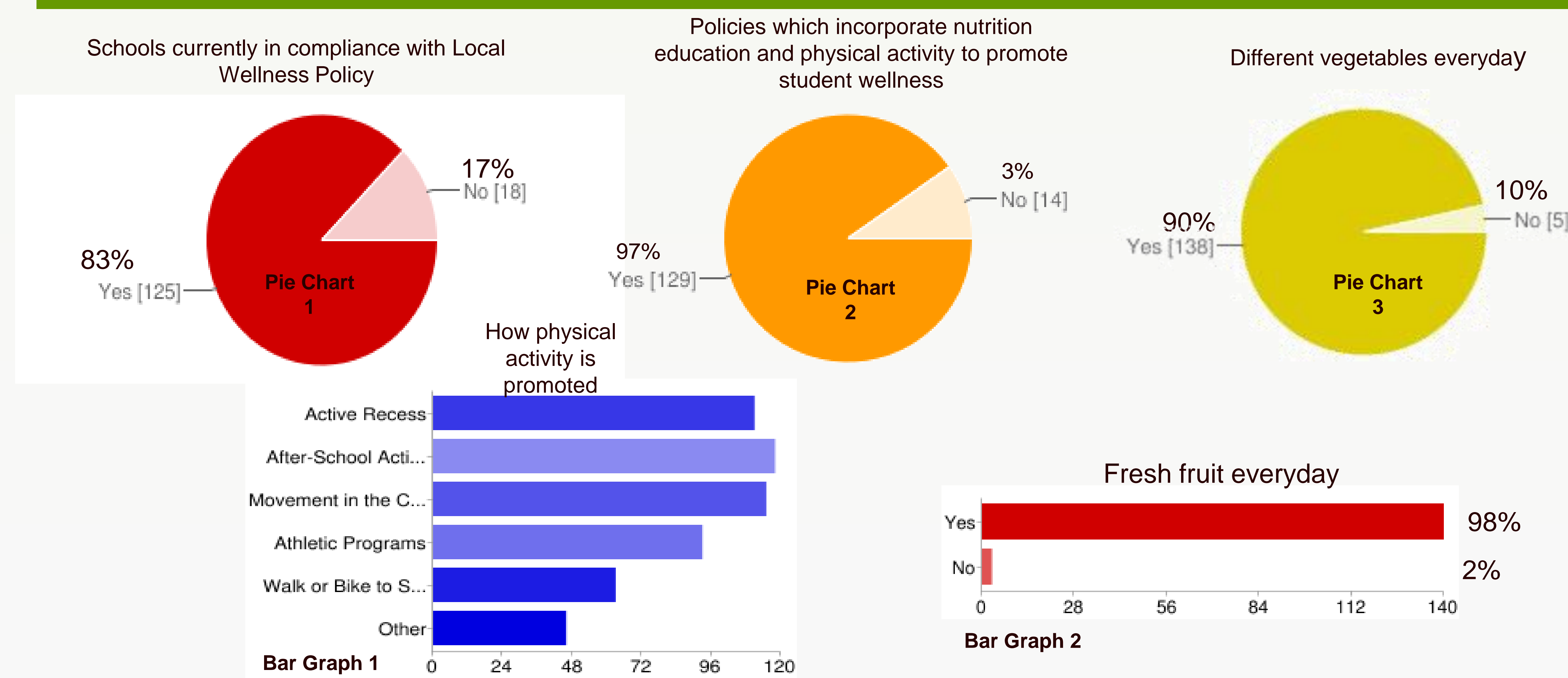
- Healthy School Act legislation overview and school lunch menu criteria;
- A workshop on the DC Best Practices of Healthy School Act implementation, Farm to School Initiatives, and model breakfast in the classroom programs ;
- Healthy School Act claims processing policies and procedures;
- Local wellness policy development and updates inclusive of the Healthy School Act mandates ;
- Healthy fundraising and celebrations mandates;
- A la carte menu criteria consistent with the Healthier US School Challenge;
- Locally grown food as defined by the Healthy School Act includes: DE, DC, MD, NJ, NC, PA, VA and WV(expansion of the "local" geographical range is due to the fact that DC does not have local farm land).

Conclusion

To ensure that the DC public school system (DCPS and DPCS) is compliant with the Healthy School Act is an exciting yet ongoing transition to behavior change. Many of the changes include the acceptance of the new menu criteria and compliance of the new local wellness policy mandates. Over time, the state agency anticipates comparative results that will capture significant outcomes. Baseline measures of implementation were compiled from School Health Profiles that the Act requires each school to submit annually. The pie charts, show that approximately 83% of schools reported compliance with their current Local Wellness Policy. Pie chart 2, shows that 90% of all schools' Local Wellness Policies include nutrition education and physical activity to promote student wellness as required by the Healthy School Act. Pie chart 3, shows that 97% of schools are incorporating different kinds of vegetables into their lunches including variations of the dark green and orange vegetables as required by the menu criteria of the HUSSC. Physical Activity mandates show that school environment activities are underway. Active Recess is most prevalent, followed by After-School Activities, Movement in the Classroom, Athletic Programs, and that Students Bike or Walk to School.



Results



References

Obesity epidemic and District of Columbia Students" *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* 2009. Web. 24 May 2011. <http://cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/pdf/obesity/dc_obesity_combo.pdf>

²"F as in Fat 2009 - Trust for America's Health." *Trust for America's Health - Preventing Epidemics. Protecting People.* Trust for America's Health, July 2009. Web. 24 May 2011. <<http://healthyamericans.org/reports/obesity2009/>>.

³"Healthy Schools Act of 2010." *Ward 3 D.C. Councilmember Mary Cheh.* Mary Cheh, May 2010. Web. 24 May 2011. <http://www.marycheh.com/index.php?option=com_content>.

⁴"Wellness and Nutrition Services Department." *Office of the State Superintendent of Education.* District of Columbia. Web.